

## ST. MARK IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE name Mark (*Marcus*, *Μάρκος*<sup>1</sup>) occurs eight times in the New Testament (Acts xii. 12, 25, xv. 37, 39; Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11; 1 Pet. v. 13). In the Acts it is the surname of a resident in Jerusalem whose Jewish name was John (xii. 12, *Ἰωάννου τοῦ ἐπικαλουμένου Μάρκου*, *ib.* 25; xv. 37, *Ἰωάννην τὸν καλούμενον [D, ἐπικαλ.] Μάρκον*, *ib.* 39, *τὸν Μάρκον*). In the Epistles the Roman name appears by itself, and without the article.

From the Augustan age or before it the Roman *prænomen* Marcus seems to have been in common use among Greek-speaking peoples. The inscriptions offer an abundance of examples.<sup>2</sup> These Greek Marks belong to different classes in society; one is a freedman, another his *patronus*; amongst them are a private soldier and a steward, and side by side with these a person is holding the dignified office of *γραμματεὺς βουλῆς καὶ δήμου*. They belong to different parts of the Empire; some are from Attica, one comes from Italy, another from Nubia. In all these instances the Roman *prænomen* stands by itself, according to Greek usage, which assigned to each individual a single personal name.

The Gospels and Acts bear witness to the readiness of the Palestinian Jew to accept a secondary name. Sometimes it was a patronymic; sometimes it indicated the

<sup>1</sup> For the accentuation see Blass on Acts xii. 25, and *Gr. des NTlichen Griechisch*, p. 15 f. The form *Μάαρκος* occurs in several inscriptions (*C.I.G.* 887, 5644, 6155).

<sup>2</sup> *C.I.G.* 6155, *Μάαρκος Μαάρκου ἀπελεύθερος*; 5109, *Μάρκος στρατιωτής*; 3162, *Μ. ταμίης*; 191, *γραμματεὺς βουλῆς καὶ δήμου Μ. Εὐκαρπίδου Ἀζηριεύς*.

locality to which he belonged, or something characteristic of his personality. Such a surname might be Aramaic, Greek, or Latin. Of Latin names there are examples in the Acts; Joseph Barsabbas was known as Justus (Acts i. 23), Simeon of Antioch as Niger (xiii. 1); the *prænomen* Gaius (Γάιος) is borne by several persons mentioned in the New Testament (Acts xix. 29, xx. 4; Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14; 3 John 1). But John Mark stands alone as a Jew bearing a Roman *prænomen* in addition to his Jewish name.<sup>1</sup> He may have adopted the second name in honour of some Roman or Greek to whom his family was indebted, and the connexion of the family with Cyprus lends some colour to this conjecture.

The mother of John Mark was a Mary, who occupied a house in Jerusalem, and was a member of the Church (Acts xii. 12). Of the father nothing is known. Mary was clearly a woman of some means, and a conspicuous person in the Christian community. Her house is furnished with a *πυλών*; a servant girl (*παιδίσκη*), probably a portress (cf. John xviii. 16, 17), opens the door; there is an *ανάγαιον* large enough to receive quite a concourse of brethren (*ἦσαν ἱκανοὶ συνηθροισμένοι*). It is the place of shelter to which Peter naturally turns upon his escape from prison; he leaves to Mary and her party the duty of communicating the tidings to the leaders of the Church (vv. 12, 17). John is not mentioned in connexion with this incident, but it may be assumed that he was present, and it is not improbable that he conveyed the intelligence to James.

This happened in the year 44. A year or two later Saul and Barnabas were at Jerusalem, bringing relief from the

<sup>1</sup> There are two curiously close parallels in the later Greek inscriptions: Dittenberger, 1137-8, Λεύκιος ὁ καὶ Μάρκος Μαραθῶνιος παιδοτρέβης; *ib.* 1142 "Ἄλιος ὁ καὶ Μάρκος Χολλείδης. These inscriptions belong to the years A.D. 170-190.

Church of Antioch to the mother Church, which was then suffering from the famine that followed the death of Agrippa. John Mark attracted the notice of the northern leaders, partly as the son of a leading member of the Church of Jerusalem, partly, it may have been, on account of services rendered by him in the distribution of the relief fund. But if we may assume his identity with the Mark of the Pauline Epistles, there was doubtless another reason which led them to select him as an associate. The Pauline Mark was *ὁ ἀνεψιὸς Βαρνάβα*, first cousin of Barnabas, son of his father's or mother's sister or brother. Whether the father of John Mark had been uncle to Joseph Barnabas, or the mother his aunt, the relationship accounts for the favour with which Barnabas persistently regarded the younger man. Probably it was Barnabas who suggested that Mark should accompany Saul and himself on their return to Antioch, as it was Barnabas who, a few years after, proposed to take him with them on a subsequent journey (Acts xv. 37).

While John was at Antioch, the call came which sent Saul and Barnabas upon a mission the destination of which was not at first revealed (Acts xiii. 2, *εἰς τὸ ἔργον ὃ προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς*). John accompanied them, but in a subordinate position (*v. 5, εἶχον δὲ καὶ Ἰωάννην ὑπηρέτην*); as Prof. Ramsay remarks,<sup>1</sup> the incidental way in which the fact is stated shews that John was not pointed out by the Spirit or delegated by the Church, but taken by the missionaries on their own responsibility. In other words, he went with them to continue the personal service which he had rendered to them at Antioch. Blass's note on *ὑπηρέτην, l.c.*, "velut ad baptizandum," restricts his duties too much; he may have been required to baptize converts (cf. x. 48; 1 Cor. i. 14 ff.), but his work as *ὑπηρέτης* would include all manner of ministerial duties which could be delegated with safety, such as making necessary arrangements for the

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 71.

journey, purchasing food, negotiating, conveying messages, and the like.<sup>1</sup> For all such forms of service John seems to have possessed a natural aptitude (cf. 2 Tim. iv. 11, *εὐχρηστος εἰς διακονίαν*), and such assistance would have been invaluable to a party of two missionaries whose time was fully occupied with the serious business of the mission. But it was rendered only for a short time. He forsook his chiefs at Perga, almost immediately after their arrival on the coast of Asia Minor. Prof. Ramsay has offered a partial defence of Mark's conduct. He points out that at Perga Saul and Barnabas entered on a new field of work, leaving the sea coast and striking across the Taurus into the interior. To Mark this seemed to be an unwarrantable departure from the original plan of the mission, and he felt himself within his rights in refusing to be a party to it.<sup>2</sup> But the plan of the mission seems to have been left to develop itself according to circumstances, and it is difficult to reconcile the hypothesis of a conscientious scruple on Mark's part with St. Paul's indignant outburst of censure (Acts xv. 38 f.). Still, it is possible that the young man thought himself justified in leaving at this point; he had not bargained for the rough work of the interior, and he was not bound to continue his gratuitous services, especially if he had received no call to accompany the mission. In any case, he took advantage of the arrival at Attalia of some ship on her way to Syria, and returned to Jerusalem. For the next two or three years we lose sight of him.

Meanwhile Paul and Barnabas paid another visit to Jerusalem, and returned again to Antioch (Acts xv. 2, 30 ff.).

<sup>1</sup> For examples of the use of *ὑπηρέτης* in Biblical Greek see Prov. xiv. 35; Sap. vi. 4; Dan. iii. 46 (Th. and LXX.); Matt. v. 25, xxvi. 58; Luke i. 2; John xviii. 18; Acts xxvi. 16; 1 Cor. iv. 1. An examination of these passages will shew that the word covers a wide range of offices, and may be used in reference to any duties not inconsistent with the position of a responsible subordinate.

<sup>2</sup> *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 61 f.

Whether on this occasion John once more accompanied his cousin to the North is uncertain, but when afterwards at Antioch St. Paul proposed a second journey to Asia Minor, and Barnabas desired to have John for their attendant as before, so serious a difference of opinion arose between the two that they parted company, and Mark set out with Barnabas alone (Acts xv. 39). Unfortunately we cannot follow them beyond Cyprus, where they are left by the writer of the Acts. The island had strong attractions for the cousins; Barnabas was *Κύπριος τῶ γενεῖ*, i.e. his family, though Levites, belonged to the body of Jewish settlers who had synagogues in Cyprus (Acts iv. 36, xiii. 5),<sup>1</sup> and Mark belonged to this family on his father's or his mother's side. A reference to Barnabas in 1 Corinthians ix. 6<sup>2</sup> implies that he was still at work in A.D. 57; whether in Cyprus and in Mark's company does not appear. But in A.D. 62 Mark's connexion with Barnabas seems to be at an end; he is in Rome among St. Paul's most faithful fellow workers—one of the few Christian Jews in the metropolis who remained loyal, and in association with the most trusted of the Apostle's Gentile converts (Col. iv. 10, *Ἀρίσταρχος . . . Μάρκος . . . Ἰησοῦς, οἱ ὄντες ἐκ περιτομῆς, οὗτοι μόνοι συνεργοί*: Philem. 24, *Ἐπαφρᾶς . . . Μάρκος Ἀρίσταρχος, Δημᾶς, Λουκᾶς, οἱ συνεργοί μου*). Nor was the reconciliation very recent; before the date of the Colossian letter, instructions had been sent to the Churches of the Lycus valley to receive Mark if he passed that way (Col. *l.c.*)<sup>3</sup> After St. Paul's release Mark returned to the East, for during the last imprisonment Timothy, who is at Ephesus, is desired to "pick him up on the way,"<sup>4</sup> and bring him back to Rome (2 Tim. iv. 11, *Μάρκον ἀναλαβὼν*

<sup>1</sup> On Jewish settlements in Cyprus see Schürer II. ii. pp. 222, 232 (E.T.), and cf. Acts xi. 20.

<sup>2</sup> ἢ μόνος ἐγὼ καὶ Βαρνάβας οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν μὴ ἐργάζεσθαι;

<sup>3</sup> *περὶ οὗ ἐλάβετε ἐντολὰς Ἐὰν ἔλθῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς, δέξασθε αὐτὸν* (see Lightfoot's note).

<sup>4</sup> Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 437.

ἄγε μετὰ σεαυτοῦ). The Apostle, now near his end, needs the services of the ὑπηρέτης of his first missionary journey; and it cannot be doubted that the attendant who failed him then was eager now to give of his best.

So far there seems to be no reasonable ground for hesitating to believe that we have been dealing with the life story of a single person. It is otherwise when we pass to the remaining instance in which a Mark is mentioned in the New Testament. The first Epistle of Peter conveys a greeting from "my son Mark" to the Churches of Asia Minor (V. 13, ἀσπάζεται ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐν Βαβυλῶνι συνεκλεκτῇ καὶ Μάρκος ὁ υἱὸς μου). Is St. Peter's "son" the John Mark of the Acts, and the Mark who was first the ὑπηρέτης, and ultimately the συνεργός of St. Paul?

It is clear that as far back as A.D. 44 Peter was familiar with the household to which John Mark belonged. To the house of John's mother he had betaken himself on the night of his deliverance from prison; his voice had been at once recognised by the portress. He had probably known both Mary and her son from the time of their conversion to the faith; possibly he had been the instrument of their conversion. This cannot, however, be inferred from the use of the affectionate term ὁ υἱὸς μου. If the spiritual relationship of a convert to his father in the faith had been in view, τέκνον would probably have been preferred (cf. 1 Cor. iv. 17; Phil. ii. 22; Philem. 10; 1 Tim. i. 2, 18; 2 Tim. i. 2, ii. 1; Tit. i. 4); of υἱὸς in this sense the New Testament has no certain example. But υἱὸς is quite in place if the Apostle's purpose is to refer to Mark as the son of an old friend, who has come to look upon him as a second father (cf. John xix. 26), and is rendering to him the offices of a filial piety. Nor need we exclude the sense which seems to have prevailed in Jewish circles, where the pupils of great Rabbis were described as their sons. It meets us in the sapiential books of the Old Testament (e.g.

Prov. i. 8, *vié* = ״בן, Sir. vii. 3), and in our Lord's reference to the "sons" of the Pharisees.<sup>1</sup> If, in early manhood, John Mark had been accustomed to sit at the feet of Peter in the assemblies of the Church at Jerusalem, their remembrance of the relation which once existed between them would entitle the aged Apostle to regard Mark in the light of a son.

But St. Peter's words further imply that Mark was with him, discharging the duties of this *quasi* filial relation, at the time when the letter was written. Is it possible to reconcile this statement with the *data* of the life of John Mark?

Assuming, as we may venture to do, that the Babylon of 1 Peter is Rome, and the *συνεκλεκτή* the Roman Church, we see before us the aged Apostle dictating a letter, which he proposes to send to Asia Minor by the hands of one of his disciples. The disciple by whom the letter is to be transmitted is Silvanus, and he may reasonably be identified with the person of the same name who is associated with St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians i. 1, 2 Thessalonians i. 1, 2 Corinthians i. 19, the Silas of the Acts (xv.-xviii.). If this identification is correct, he is the colleague whom St. Paul chose to supply the place of Barnabas, when Barnabas took Mark with him to Cyprus. The letter with which Silvanus is now charged by St. Peter is addressed to the Churches of Asia Minor in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, among which would be the Churches of Ephesus and the Lycus valley, to whom St. Paul had written during his first imprisonment. Moreover, this letter from St. Peter, when it comes to be examined, is full of reminiscences of two of St. Paul's letters, the Epistle to the Romans and the circular Epistle "to the Ephesians."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 27=Luke xi. 19. Cf. the reference in Iren. iv. 41, 42 to a saying of *quidam ante nos*—possibly Pothinus, as Harvey suggests.

<sup>2</sup> Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. lxxiv ff.; Hort, *Romans and Ephesians*, p. 168f.

The whole situation is most suggestive. St. Peter writes from Rome to Pauline Churches; he bases much of his teaching on St. Paul's Epistles to the Roman Church and the Churches of Asia; he sends this letter by the hands of one of St. Paul's former colleagues, he sends greeting from another. Is it possible to avoid the conclusion that, when 1 Peter was written, St. Paul had finished his course? The care of the Pauline Churches has fallen on St. Peter; the two oldest associates of St. Paul, both originally members of the Church of Jerusalem (Acts xii. 12, xv. 22), have transferred their services to the surviving Apostle. But though the leader is changed, the teaching is the same, and St. Peter is careful to shew, both by the character of his Epistle and his selection of colleagues, that he has no other end than to take up and carry on the work of St. Paul.

If we assent to these conclusions, no doubt will remain as to the identity of the Mark of 1 Peter with the Mark of Colossians and Philemon, the John Mark of the Acts. That in this case the association of Mark with St. Peter followed the death of St. Paul is scarcely a serious difficulty. The tradition which represents the two Apostles as having suffered on the same day is probably due, as Bishop Lightfoot shews,<sup>1</sup> to the synchronous deposition of their bodies in the cemetery on the Appian Way, June 29th, 258. Dionysius of Corinth states, it is true, that they were martyred *κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν χρόνον*, "but the expression must not be too rigorously pressed, even if the testimony of a Corinthian could be accepted as regards the belief in Rome," and, we may add, the testimony of a bishop who wrote in the second half of the second century as regards matters of fact which belong to the history of the first.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Clement of Rome*, ii., p. 499 f.

<sup>2</sup> Harnack refers also (*Chronologie*, i. p. 242) to Clem. R., *Cor.* 6: *τούτοις τοῖς ἀνδρασι* (sc. Πέτρος καὶ Παῦλος) *ὁσίως πολιτευσασμένοις συνηθροίσθη πολὺ πλῆθος ἐκλεκτῶν*



Lightfoot, indeed, while divorcing the martyrdom of St. Peter from that of St. Paul, placed the death of St. Peter first; but the opposite view is not inconsistent with the evidence, and is more in harmony with the phenomena presented by 1 Peter.<sup>1</sup> The precise date of 1 Peter is still, it is true, an open question. Prof. Ramsay would place it A.D. 75-80; Dr. Sanday does "not think it easy to prolong [St. Peter's] life beyond the year 70."<sup>2</sup> But in either case, if we allow the identification of St. Peter's "son" with St. Paul's "fellow-worker," the Epistle contributes two important facts to the personal history of St. Mark. After the death of St. Paul he attached himself to that other great teacher from whom he had learned his earliest lessons of faith and life. When he appears in a New Testament writing for the last time, John Mark is still at Rome, near the grave of St. Paul, and ministering to the old age of St. Peter.

The tradition of the Church, which is reserved for a second paper, will lead us to connect the minister, colleague, and son of Apostles with the Evangelist to whom Alexandria owed her faith, and Rome and all Christendom the earliest and freshest of the Synoptic records of the Ministry and Passion.

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*οἵτινες πολλὰς αἰκίας καὶ βασάνους . . . ὑπόδειγμα κάλλιστον ἐγένοντο ἐν ἡμῖν*  
 where, as Lightfoot says, "the reference must be chiefly, though not solely, to the sufferers in the Neronian persecution." But the passage does not necessarily imply that these sufferings synchronised with those of the Apostles, still less, as Harnack admits (p. 243 n), that the martyrdom took place in the year 64. That St. Peter was believed to have been buried in the Vatican has suggested that he was among the victims of the first outbreak of persecution (Lightfoot, Harnack), but does not amount to a proof of the fact.

<sup>1</sup> See Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire*, p. 280 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *EXPOSITOR*, iv. vii. p. 411 ff.